



Summer Nights in Downtown San Jose

Posted by [Pierluigi Oliverio](#) on Monday, August 06, 2007

I took advantage of the great Bay Area weather that San Jose benefits from and attended two night time events that were held outdoors in downtown.

I went to the Christmas in the Park fundraiser at the Circle of Palms two weeks ago. The night was filled with great company, a silent auction, wine and opportunities to win trips. All of this was outside in the heart of San Jose.

The Circle of the Palms is located in the central area between the San Jose Museum of Art, the Fairmont Hotel and the Knight Ridder building. The palm trees were planted in a circle to commemorate San Jose as the first capitol of California before the capitol was moved to Benicia and then Sacramento. The Circle of Palms also serves as the home to San Jose's ice skating rink in the winter. The view from the second story of the Fairmont looking down upon all the people ice skating is picturesque.

The second event I attended was the Grand Prix. As we know, the car races were held on our downtown streets. However, there was also an evening event which was held at the City Hall rotunda and the outside plaza area. Once again, this was a great event with fun people, catered by Smoke Barbeque, a local small downtown business, with music and beverages.

Although I acknowledge the financial pains the new City Hall has cost the city, I also recognize the importance of being proud of the building and the ambiance it offers. I would like to see more events there. For example, San Francisco City Hall hosts the Black & White ball for their symphony, a great outdoor event that I have attended several times.

However, one hiccup that events at City Hall encounter is the city policy of not allowing hard liquor and cocktails in public places. So, currently, you may not take your drink made with hard alcohol outside the rotunda to the plaza where the food is located and the dancing is taking place. I am hopeful that we can change this absurd policy for City Hall so all groups can enjoy the evening weather on the plaza with food and drink.

What I remember most about the events I attended was that I loved being outside in downtown San Jose. I think we should promote our outside facilities. Why not make it easier for non-profits to host charity events in our public open spaces downtown?

I do know that San Jose needs to improve its permit and setup process for outdoor public spaces. Could you imagine hosting our sister city dinners outdoors? Visitors from states that do not have the weather that we do would enjoy the climate, the views and ambiance. We are missing out on using opportunities like this to promote our open-air locations.

San Jose competes with many cities for hosting conventions; therefore, I think we should promote our downtown outside spaces to local businesses and other groups. For example, Portland has done a great job by taking advantage of its greatest outdoor asset: the Columbia River in Portland's downtown core. Why shouldn't San Jose make the most of its outdoor assets too? There is no reason why many of our local companies would not want to host their annual employee parties, user groups or other corporate events on the plaza at City Hall.

Summer is not over yet; I suggest visiting San Pedro Square and Saint James Park for their free movie nights every Wednesday and Friday through August. In addition, there is Music in the Park (Cesar Chavez) on Thursday nights. Or, go find something new in downtown San Jose that you haven't done before!

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